

INTRODUCTION

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At the outset, I should like to outline what we hope to accomplish this evening. Fallout has been mentioned, and certainly, in the present context of world events, when anyone, even those working in this field, thinks of radiation, the significance of fallout inevitably comes up.

But the question is: What should we be concerned with this evening? We would like to consider our subject from the two points of view which we think would be of interest to this group. First, as physicians in the field of occupational health, most of you are concerned with the effects of occupational exposures to ionizing radiation.

Since the effects of ionizing radiation are cumulative, the impact that it may have on the worker in any specific occupational situation has to be viewed in the context of the total radiation to which the individual is exposed. For purposes of administration we have arbitrarily decided that certain exposures will not be considered in terms of record keeping. As physicians, however, in evaluating the impact of radiation on the individual, we do have to consider all sources. The first area, then, is your particular interest in occupational exposure.

A second area is the much broader one of environmental radiation. More than many other physicians, you tend to be looked upon as experts by people outside the field when questions about radiation arise. In the Public Health Service we are getting an increasing number of inquiries from physicians who say they are being subjected to questioning about fallout by newspaper reporters, by housewives, mothers, and all kinds of people, because of the widespread public concern in the present situation.

Our first speaker, Dr. Charles L. Dunham, will set the stage for us by considering broadly the kinds of observed effects from exposure to ionizing radiation, with particular emphasis on the human experience.

The other members of the panel will consider various sources of radiation exposure. We hope we shall be able to indicate how these various sources of exposure fit into the total context.